

ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

February 11, 2013

ADE Discusses Common Core and Charter Schools (KARK, Channel 4)

The Arkansas State Board of Education is meeting for a work session to discuss Common Core state standards and upcoming charter school renewal process ahead of the board's meeting Monday morning.

The goal of the work session is to prepare for the meeting and allow board members a chance go in depth and ask questions and get answers about the major decisions they'll be making for students around the state.

The Arkansas Department of Education Commissioner Dr. Tom Kimbrell says Common Core has really been a challenge for teachers. " It's been a change for teachers in not only English language and math, but across the curriculum because we're trying to pull all the other contents in because it's really about a different way of approaching instruction."

The goal of implementing Common Core standards is to get students to think more deeply about the material. Last year, Kindergarten through 2nd grade transitioned to Common Core standards. This year 3rd through 8th, and next year, 9th through 12th grade will be implemented. ADE Director of Curriculum and Instruction Tracy Tucker says it's important to remember this is a process. "This is not implementation we're going to be able to mark off our list as done in a few years. It's going to be something our teachers continue to work on. We need to provide them the time and support they need to learn what it is they need to learn to teach all students so they're all college and career ready."

The Arkansas State Board of Education is also looking at the renewal process of charter schools. 5 schools are looking to renew their charters. Dr. Kimbrell says no decisions are made at the work session. It's just an opportunity to see if certain criteria has been met, if the charter schools have solid leadership, and evaluate student test scores. "A charter is nothing but a contract with the State Board. "

It's a stringent process to become a successful charter school, to met the goals and show a need for an alternative option to public schools.

The Arkansas State Board of Education meets Monday morning at 9 o'clock.

Mansfield Schools Plan School-Based Health Clinic (Southwest Times Record, Fort Smith)

Mansfield Public Schools students, their parents, teachers and community members will have access to a full-time, school-based health clinic with the start of school this fall, Mansfield school officials announced last week.

The clinic will be housed at Mansfield Elementary School and will be the first of its kind in Arkansas in that it involves a corporate partnership with a large health-care provider, Mercy Clinic Fort Smith, said Tracey Sadoski, Mansfield coordinated school health director.

Grant Morris, Mercy Clinic regional director of operations, said: “Mercy is proud to have provided care for the people of Mansfield for many years. The prospect of partnering with the Mansfield School District to provide better access to health care for the students and employees of Mansfield School District is an exciting one. Mercy is always looking for new ways to make it easier for people to get health care, and this is one of many innovative ways to reach our patients.”

Mercy will provide medical health services, potentially, too, by incorporating Telehealth to allow clients to access specialists without having to leave the area, Sadoski said.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Telehealth is the use of electronic information and telecommunications technology to aid with long-distance clinical health care. Technologies used in Telehealth include videoconferencing, the Internet, streaming media and wireless communications.

Sadoski said the district learned in December that it had received a \$500,000 grant from the Department of Health and Human Services to create the school-based clinic. Mansfield is one of only two Arkansas school districts to ever receive the federal grant, she said.

The Mansfield School Board voted last spring to become an Arkansas Department of Education Coordinated School Health District to provide the best possible educational experience for Mansfield students.

The Coordinated School Health program focuses on eight components — physical health, mental health, nutrition, physical education, health education, healthy school environment, parental involvement and staff wellness, Sadoski said.

The clinic will be located on the elementary campus in a to-be-renovated building on the corner of Walnut and Center streets. Sadoski said the corner location with its existing roads will make the clinic both easy to access and easy to secure. The grant money is funding the renovation, she said.

Renovation plans have been finalized with Architects Plus, and plans are to advertise for construction bids, select a general contractor in March and begin construction in April. The medical and mental health clinics are expected to open when the 2013-14 school year starts in August, Sadoski said. The dental and vision clinics are expected to open shortly afterward, she said.

Students will use a separate clinic entrance than will the community, Sadoski said. The school bus lane will be relocated to enable the separate, dedicated entrances. The student entrance will be secured at all times, and community clients will have no access to the school grounds, she said.

Superintendent Robert Ross said he has a vision for educating the “whole child.” Children must not only be offered superior academic opportunities, but the district must also consider their physical, mental and social health, he said. The clinic will also meet a significant need in the community, he said.

Sadoski said students will receive priority treatment and will not be turned away regardless of their ability to pay. The clinic will accept an unlimited number of Medicare and Medicaid patients, she said.

Students and their parents will especially benefit because students will no longer have to check out of school to see a doctor, Sadoski said.

Parents will complete a basic information sheet for their children at the beginning of the year. If a child needs medical, dental, vision or counseling services, the child will see the school nurse who will consult with the child’s

parents then refer the child to the clinic as needed, Sadoski said. Students may also receive well-child visits, yearly vision exams and dental cleanings, she said.

Arkansas Legislature: Budget Bills On Agenda For Lawmakers' Fifth Week (Southwest Times Record, Fort Smith)

LITTLE ROCK — State agency budget bills will begin flowing through the Legislature this week, a sign that the 89th General Assembly may be hitting its stride a month into the 2013 session.

“We’re going to start running more general revenue bills, so we’ll be getting into the meat of the subject, so to speak,” said Sen. Larry Teague, D-Nashville, co-chairman of the Joint Budget Committee.

Up until now, much of the attention on the session has been on issues such as abortion restrictions and gun rights. Considering budget bills is sign that the Legislature is beginning to reach high gear, Teague said.

“It’s when people start dialing in and paying a lot more attention,” he said, adding that House and Senate leaders continue to work on a plan to address a \$61 million shortfall in Medicaid and whether the state can afford to expand Medicaid.

“There are a lot of things still undecided,” Teague said, adding that after the Medicaid questions are resolved, lawmakers will tackle the budgets of the “big six” state agency budgets — Department of Education Public School Fund, Department of Health, Department of Human Services, Department of Correction and Community Correction, and higher education institutions.

Meanwhile, while the budget committee starts reviewing agency budgets for next fiscal year, lawmakers are expected to debate bills that would limit abortions, require voter identification and strengthen state laws regarding human trafficking.

A number of bills on controversial issues remain on committee, House and Senate calendars, including the so-called human heartbeat bill, an amended version of which could be considered on the House floor as early as Tuesday.

As originally written, SB 134 by Sen. Jason Rapert, R-Conway, would have required any woman seeking an abortion in Arkansas to undergo a test for a fetal heartbeat and would have prohibited the abortion if a heartbeat is detected, unless the woman’s life is in danger or the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest. A heartbeat usually can be detected six weeks into pregnancy.

An amended version received a “do pass” recommendation from the House Public Health and Welfare Committee last week. It would not ban abortions before 12 weeks and would require that the heartbeat test be performed via external abdominal ultrasound.

If the amended bill is approved in the House, it would have to go back to the Senate for a final vote. Gov. Mike Beebe has said the bill appears to be unconstitutional but has not said whether he would veto it.

Also Tuesday, the Senate State Agencies and Governmental Affairs Committee is expected to consider Senate Bill 2 by Sen. Bryan King, R-Green Forest, which would require registered voters to show a photo ID at the polls.

Under the bill, all the equipment needed to make the photo IDs would have to be provided by the Arkansas Secretary of State.

Also this week, identical bills that would strengthen the state's human trafficking law are to be considered in both the House and Senate public health committees.

The Senate on Thursday approved SB 242 by Sen. Missy Irvin, R-Mountain View, and the House on Friday approved HB 1203 by Rep. David Meeks, R-Conway. Both measures would expand the definition of human trafficking and make it a Class Y felony, punishable by 10 to 40 years or life in prison. Human trafficking is currently a Class A felony, punishable by six to 30 years in prison and up to a \$15,000 fine.

They also would allow victims to collect restitution; make it a felony for a person to knowingly patronize a prostitute who is a human trafficking victim; allow a person accused of prostitution to claim as a defense that the prostitution was the result of being a victim of human trafficking; and allow the attorney general to create a task force on human trafficking.

Meeks' bill is expected to be considered in the Senate Public Health Committee and Irvin's bill in the House Public Health Committee.

The Senate Public Health Committee also could consider this Wednesday HB 1037 by Rep. Andy Mayberry, R-Hensley, which would ban an abortion after 20 weeks — the point at which the bill claims a fetus is able to feel pain — except to save the life of the mother or save her from irreversible physical impairment.

The bill passed the House but is stuck in the Senate committee, where some members have said they cannot support it without an exception for pregnancies caused by rape or incest.

Mayberry said each of the four Republicans on the panel has said they would vote for the measure and that he just needs to get support from one of the four Democrats.

Also, Wednesday is the deadline for lawmakers to file proposed constitutional amendments for possible referral to the November 2014 general election ballot.

The Legislature can refer up to three constitutional amendments to voters, or four if one concerns legislative salaries. As of late Friday afternoon, six had been filed in the Senate and one in the House.

Education notebook (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

LITTLE ROCK — LR graduates win AP Scholar Awards

Whitney Gao and Joseph Berleant, both recent graduates of Little Rock Central High, have earned State AP Scholar Awards for Arkansas for their performance on Advanced Placement examinations during their high school careers.

They are among 108 students nationwide to receive State AP Scholar Award honors.

Gao took 21 examinations in Advanced Placement subjects from 2009 to 2012 and earned a mean score of 4.90 on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the top score, according to information provided by the Little Rock School District.

Gao is now a freshman studying at Harvard University.

Berleant took 21 examinations from 2010 to 2012 and earned a mean score of 4.71.

He is now a freshman studying at the California Institute of Technology.

Students who receive scores of 3 or higher on a College Board's Advanced Placement Program examination have the potential to qualify for college credit or advanced placement at colleges and universities.

"We are proud of our school's competitive and rigorous Advanced Placement Program," Central High Principal Nancy Rousseau said. "We recognize and celebrate the outstanding accomplishments of these two students, the only two students in the state to receive this honor this year."

3,100 iPads seen in city's schools

The Little Rock School District is now home to 3,100 iPad computer tablets spread over its nearly 50 campuses, for student and adult use, according to a report given to the district's School Board.

Another 1,974 of the tablets are on order.

The district has used federal School Improvement Grants and federal Title I funds to purchase the popular tablets for its four campuses that are among the lowest achieving in the state.

J.A. Fair High, a recipient of a School Improvement Grant, has 310 iPads. Hall High, another improvement grant recipient, has 277 of the electronic tablets, while McClellan High, a more recent recipient of the same grant, has 111 iPads. Cloverdale Middle School has 315 tablets, also a result of being an improvement grant recipient.

All of the iPads on order will go to those four schools.

Other schools in the district have iPads, just not in the same quantities. Central High has 56 iPads and Parkview High has 22, according to the report. There are far more iPads at the district's middle schools.

In all, there are 872 iPads in the high schools, 1,532 in the middle schools and 696 iPads distributed among the district's elementary schools.

The district also owns 11,831 desktop computers and 2,369 laptop computers, with 559 more laptops on order.

Teen brains focus of NLR workshop

The North Little Rock School District's Secondary Family Involvement Committees are hosting a free one-hour workshop titled Inside the Teenage Brain at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday in the Lakewood Middle School and ninth-grade campus mini-auditorium.

Workshop leaders will review current research on adolescent brain development, including topics such as why teens are so impulsive and emotional, and why they like to take risks and sleep in late. Workshop participants will be given strategies for effectively dealing with challenging teenage behaviors.

Door prizes, including a one night stay at the Crown Plaza Hotel, will be provided. Snacks provided by Starbucks and Simply the Best will be served.

Bit by bit by little bit (Editorial, Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

LITTLE ROCK — YOU'RE ILL. Have been for a while. This morning you take your temperature and it's a degree lower than yesterday's 103. And you feel like you could maybe drink a glass of juice. You're getting better.

But you're still ill.

You're out of shape. Have been for a while. Today on the treadmill you're able to walk a quarter of a mile. At a slow pace. When you first joined the gym after the holidays, your New Year's resolution to get in shape seemed impossible. You could only walk a few dozen paces before you tired out. Now you're up to a quarter-mile. You're getting better.

But you're still out of shape.

You smoke cigarettes. Have for a while. You're trying to get off the coffin nails, but it's hard. You used to smoke two packs a day. Now you're down to one. By spring you hope to be down to a half-pack. You're doing better.

But you're still a smoker.

That's the feeling some of us had when we read the story in the paper late last month about the remediation rate at Arkansas' colleges. The number of students in this state who started college last year unprepared for the work has dropped from 2011. And it's not the first year that's happened. There has been a steady decline in the number of those who need remedial courses over the years. Last year, the number of kids needing some extra attention dropped to the lowest it's been since memory runneth not to the contrary.

But still, nearly half of all those entering college still need those remediation courses. Improvement is being made, sure. But the state's public K-12 education system is an awful long way from where it needs to be. In this regard, the state is up to a quarter of a mile on the ol' treadmill. But still out of shape.

"Only" 47.8 percent of students who started college in the fall of last year needed remedial courses, according to the latest figures. But that's still forty seven-point-eight percent.

Yes, 47.8 percent of high schoolers graduate but can't get a 19 on one of the three main parts of the ACT test. Which means they have to take noncredit courses in college before they can dip into the regular curriculum.

Those remedial courses don't count toward graduation, but at least they cost the same as the ones for credit.

We don't want to rain on anybody's parade. The state is improving in this regard. But let's not start planning any ticker-tape parades, either.

CALVIN JOHNSON is the interim chancellor of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, the school with the highest percentage of students assigned to remedial classes. Even though some say it shouldn't be the college's job to teach things the students should have learned in high school, he accepts that responsibility. (Somebody has to.) To quote the chancellor:

"It's a challenge for us, but that's our mission, and we feel good when we are able to get those students on track."

Bless you, Calvin Johnson. Bless you, and bless all the college faculty across the state. Especially those who are helping struggling kids.

But teaching remedial classes really shouldn't be a college's job. And wouldn't be if the K-12 schools were doing their job, and the kids theirs.

If you agree that it's unacceptable that nearly half of those entering college in Arkansas aren't ready for it, then consider this: That 47.8 percent only includes those who want to go to college in the first place. What about all those kids who graduate from high school with no thought of college? What if their ACT scores were added up, too? That could be a whole lot of kids that a whole lot of schools are failing.

Somebody remind us again why the status quo in K-12 schools is just fine, and that the state shouldn't take chances with charter schools, vouchers, teacher testing, competition and a simpler, more transparent way to grade schools and school districts.

On second thought, don't remind us. We're still trying to keep this editorial positive.

After all, the state is making progress in remediation.

Decimal point by decimal point.
